

Executive Summary for the 2009 *Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County*

Produced for the Women's & Girls' Fund of Kern County, Kern Community Foundation

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Executive Summary

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This executive summary provides highlights from the *2009 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County*. Sections featured in the full report include information on population demographics, basic needs, economic stability, education, health care, safety, and aging issues for women and girls in Kern County. The report provides information on both Kern County and California. In addition, a section on interviews with Kern County social service professionals about the status of women and girls in Kern County is included.

The findings presented in this report will be made available on the Kern Community Foundation's website to be utilized by county agencies, lawmakers, and policymakers to help improve the quality of life for women and girls in Kern County.

Introduction

This report is the first of its kind and compiles multi-faceted data on population demographics, basic needs, work stability, education and training, health care, physical, sexual, and domestic safety, and aging issues from a variety of sources listed in the summary. In addition, agency input in the form of selected comments from face-to-face interviews conducted by the primary researcher is summarized in the report. Several topics are covered in this section including domestic violence, substance abuse, self esteem, education, mentoring, teenage pregnancy, poverty, and transportation.

Population Demographics

This brief section uses data from the United States Census Bureau, California Department of Finance, and American Community Survey. It includes estimates for Kern County's population by sex, age group, ethnicity, and race.

- ◆ In 2007, the total population of Kern County was 790,710. Nine percent of Kern County's female population were between the ages of 0 and 4, 21% were between the ages of 5 and 17, 60% were between the ages of 18 and 64, and 10% were 65 and over.
- ◆ There were 273,695 adult women in Kern County and 115,415 girls under 18. Girls and women represented 50.3% of the population.
- ◆ In terms of the county's racial diversity, 81% of women reported their race as White, 5% African American, 4% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% reported two or more races.
- ◆ Thirty-seven percent of women in the county were of Hispanic/Latino origin.

Basic Needs and Services

This section uses data from the California Health Interview Survey, California Childcare Resource and Referral Network, United Way of Kern County, and American Community Survey. It includes information on food bank access, nutrition, food stamp assistance, housing homelessness, and transportation.

Highlights include:

- ◆ Thirty three percent of Kern County women could not afford enough food to sustain their families in 2007.
- ◆ Only 5% of Kern County women in poverty received public housing assistance in 2003.
- ◆ In 2006, the Bakersfield Homeless Shelter reported that 66% of those who received services were women.
- ◆ Almost twice as many women used public transportation than men in Kern County in 2007.

Economic Stability

This section uses data from the American Community Survey, Employment Development Department, California Health Interview Survey, and California Childcare Resource and Referral Network. It includes information on labor force participation, paid family leave, earnings and occupations, poverty, public assistance, and childcare.

Highlights include:

- ◆ In 2008, women made up approximately 43% of Kern County's labor force. The occupation most frequently occupied by Kern County women was Office/Administrative Support.
- ◆ For the second quarter of 2008, on average, Kern County women made 60 cents for every dollar earned by Kern County men. The greatest income disparity by gender was among doctors, dentists, and diagnosticians.
- ◆ Women made up 70% of single parent households in Kern County during 2007.
- ◆ In 2006, only 31.8% of new mothers received paid family leave after giving birth to a child.
- ◆ Only 13% of Kern County women in poverty received cash aid assistance in 2005.
- ◆ In 2004, on average, Kern County families spent 41% or more of their monthly income on childcare alone.

Education and Training

This section uses data from the California Department of Education, California Department of Social Services, RAND California, American Community Survey and California State University, Bakersfield. It includes information on enrollments, educational attainment, dropout rates, Exit Exam results, STAR test scores, and college prep classes.

Highlights include:

- ◆ In 2007, 17% of Kern County women over age 25 did not have a high school diploma. Only 12% of Kern County women had attained a bachelor's degree and less than 5% had an educational attainment beyond a bachelor's degree.
- ◆ Of those who were in poverty with some college or an associate degree, 65% were women. Of those who were in poverty with a bachelor's degree, 61% were women.
- ◆ The high school drop-out rate for females in Kern County was 25.2% compared to California's female drop-out rate of 21.1% in 2008.
- ◆ In 2008, less than 25% of female high school graduates met the UC/CSU entrance requirements.
- ◆ In May 2009, of those Kern County residents receiving CalWORKS Welfare-to-Work assistance, over one-third were receiving job search and job readiness assistance.

Health Care

This section uses data from the California Department of Public Health, California Health Information Survey, Kern County Department of Public Health Services, California Healthy Kids Survey, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, and California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. It includes information on mortality, health risks, health insurance, birth data, and teen pregnancy.

Highlights include:

- ◆ The leading cause of death for women in Kern County in 2007 was heart disease.
- ◆ In 2007, nearly 20% of Kern County women were diagnosed with asthma in comparison to 14% of women statewide.
- ◆ Forty-eight percent of women in Kern County surveyed reported being overweight or obese, in comparison to 43% of women statewide.
- ◆ In Kern County, females account for an average of 76% of the Chlamydia cases reported since 2003.
- ◆ A higher proportion of women statewide are methamphetamine users compared to men. Methamphetamine is the most common drug for women users in California (44%).
- ◆ In 2007, approximately 13% of women in Kern County had no medical coverage.
- ◆ Kern County has the 4th highest teen pregnancy rate in California.

Physical, Sexual, and Domestic Safety

This section uses data from the California Office of Statewide Planning and Development, California Healthy Kids Survey, University of California, Berkeley Center for Social Services Research, RAND California, Alliance Against Family Violence, and California Department of Justice. It includes information on injuries, community safety, foster care, domestic violence, sexual assault, adult and juvenile crime.

Highlights include:

- ◆ Unintentional poisoning and motor vehicle accidents were the two leading causes of fatal injuries to women in Kern County in 2006.
- ◆ Falls were the leading cause of non-fatal injuries. Women over 65 accounted for nearly two-thirds of these non-fatal falls.
- ◆ Thirty percent of 7th grade girls surveyed in Kern County reported being harassed at school in 2008.
- ◆ Since 2007, Kern County has had a higher number of reported incidents of domestic violence in comparison to California
- ◆ According to the AAFV, there were 3,459 hotline calls for Fiscal Year 2007-2008. This is a 42% increase from Fiscal Year 2006-2007.
- ◆ Since 2003, the number of adult female arrests has increased by 18%.

Senior and Aging Issues

This section uses data from the California Department of Aging, American Community Survey, and RAND California. It includes information on population, poverty and disability status, health, safety, supportive services, grandparent-headed households, and assisted living sites.

Highlights include:

- ◆ There is a projected increase of 65% in Kern County's aging population by the year 2020. This is 6% higher than the statewide projections for 2020.
- ◆ In 2007, twenty percent of the aging population in Kern County was in poverty. This is 7% higher than the aging population in poverty statewide.
- ◆ Eighty-seven percent of elder hospitalizations in Kern County were due to accidental falls in 2005. .
- ◆ From 2004-2005 to 2005-2006, the number of aging persons receiving Aging Supportive Services is estimated to have declined by 63%. The California Department of Aging projects that this decline will have continued for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.
- ◆ In 2007, 14% of households in Kern County are headed by grandparents with no parent present in the home. This is almost 6% higher than the percentage of grandparent-headed households statewide.

Kern County Social Service Professionals Discuss the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County

This section includes selected quotes from face-to-face interviews, conducted by the primary researcher, with individuals working in non-profit agencies and social service organizations.

Interviewees were asked a series of questions. One question posed included: What do you think are the most significant issues women and girls are facing today in Kern County?

Domestic Violence was the most frequent issue highlighted by participants, followed by substance abuse and self-esteem. Fifty percent of participants stated that domestic violence was one of the most significant issues facing Kern County women and girls. The majority of participants also mentioned transportation as a significant barrier for accessing needed services.

A full list includes:

1. Domestic Violence
2. Substance abuse
3. Self-esteem
4. Education
5. Lack of mentors
6. Poverty
7. Transportation
8. Resources
9. Teenage Pregnancy
10. Lack of Role Models
11. Basic Needs (Food, Clothing, Housing, Employment)
12. Sexual Assault
13. Affordable, Adequate Childcare
14. Traditional Gender Roles
15. Pay Inequality
16. Fragmentation of Services
17. Peer Pressure
18. Violence (in general)
19. Hopelessness
20. Lack of opportunities